

ORDINARY TIME – FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

RECOLLECTING OURSELVES FOR WORSHIP

Music (please use this time for quiet and reflection)

Gong [followed by silence]

Call to Worship

Hymn – 483

Opening Prayer

OUR HUMANNESS AND GOD’S GRACE

Call to Confession

Unison Prayer of Confession

Gracious God, I have missed the mark. That is, I am not the person I was taught I should be, and I am not the person I thought I was. I am less than those, and more; someone else, someone other, and in addition. I sometimes feel guilty about what I am not, expecting you to be angry and judgmental. You are neither of these. You are curious about what I am, and invite me to be the same.

Personal Prayer of Confession in Silence

Assurance of Pardon

LISTENING FOR THE WORD OF GOD

Story for the Children

Scripture – Luke 7:36—8:3

Prompting

Silence and Reflection

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Hymn – 198

Announcements

Minute for Mission

Our Gifts and Offerings

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Christ all creatures here below;
Praise Holy Spirit, Comforter;
One God, Triune, whom we adore. Amen.

The Prayers of the People and Lord’s Prayer

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us in the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

GOING OUT – to serve, to journey, to live the word

Hymn – 223

Charge and Benediction

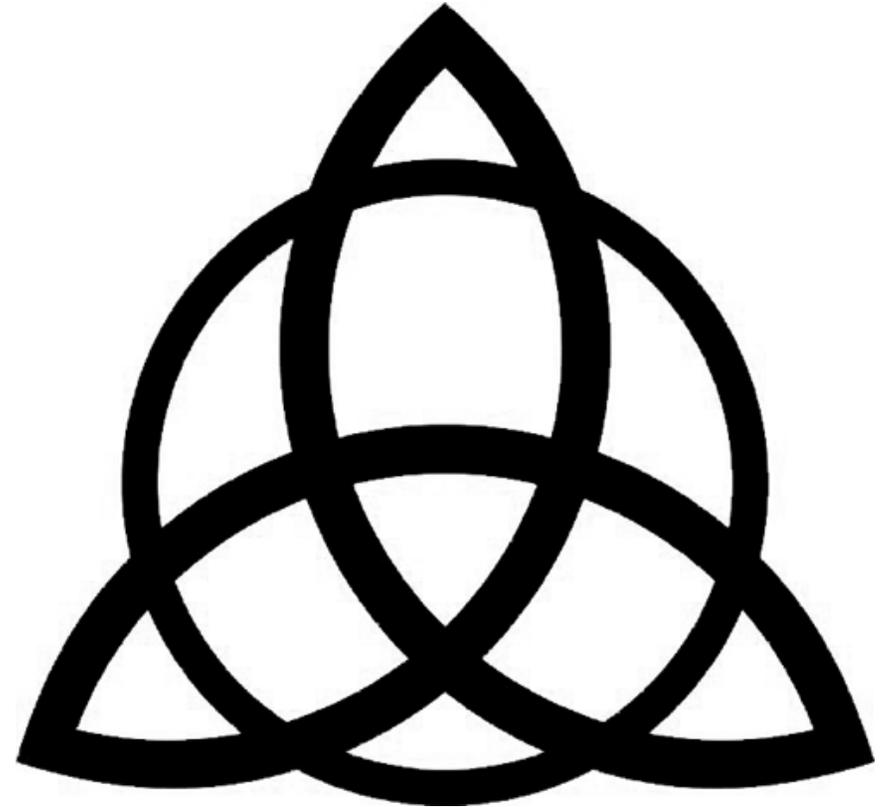
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

| | | |
|--------|-------|-----------------------------|
| TODAY | 10:00 | Worship |
| | 11:00 | Coffee and Fellowship |
| | 11:20 | Conversation |
| | 12:00 | Lunch Bunch |
| MONDAY | 1:00 | Centering Prayer, at church |

Lectionary Readings from Cycle C for June 19, 2016
1 Kings 19:1-4 (5-7) 8-15a; Psalm 42 & 43;
Galatians 3:23-29; Luke 8:26-39.

FYI

Next Sunday we will share lunch. Plan to stay and bring some food to share.



**This symbol is known as a “Triquetra.”
It is a symbol for the Trinity.**

Ushers: Jim Plein and Jenny Goldgur.

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Ordinary Time – 4th Sunday after Pentecost (Luke 7:36—8:3)

In this story, Jesus is visiting in the home of a Pharisee and a woman who is described as a “sinner” attends to his feet. Toward the end of the story Jesus comments that she has attended to him in this way because she has been forgiven, and, having been forgiven, has shown great love. I believe we make an assumption that Jesus is the one who forgave this woman, although the story does not tell us that. Jesus does say to her “Your sins are forgiven,” but that is not until after she has attended to him. I believe it is more accurate to think that the woman arrived at the home of the Pharisee in a state of being forgiven, and her attending to Jesus was a result of her being so. When Jesus says “Your sins are forgiven” he is giving voice to what she has already experienced. The question I raise is: How would we, in our time and thought-world, come to a state of living in a place of being forgiven?

The word translated into English as “sinner” is a Greek word meaning “sinful, i.e. a sinner,” and comes from a root meaning “to miss the mark (and so not share in the prize).” The word “sinner” carries the meaning that there is a fundamental quality or characteristic built into human beings, and that the presence of this characteristic makes it so that we “miss the mark” in the way we live. I would describe this characteristic as the tendency to make ourselves into the center, the reference, through which everything about us is perceived and understood. What we concluded from our experience of childhood, and what we were taught and internalized as we grew up, becomes the lens through which everything in our life is seen, the standard against which everything in our life is evaluated. We rarely perceive ourselves apart from this acquired and/or inherited and then internalized self-reference. This is how our minds work, and because our minds work this way we miss the mark of seeing our life on its own terms. To be a sinner means that a person possesses the awareness that this self-referenced way of looking at their life is true of them, and that the way they see themselves misses the mark of seeing themselves more accurately. When a person says they are a sinner they are indicating that they realize that their life is not necessarily what they believe it is. That our life may not what we believe it is, is

something that can be explored and understood. Seeing this opens up the option of there being other ways to look at our own life; it becomes possible to look in ways that differ from those we internalized when growing up. I am suggesting that the woman in the story is a person for whom the realization that she is a sinner has come to her, and she has internalized it.

The words “sin” and “sinner” are neutral words. This is easy to see in English where the root of “sin” is the verb “to be,” and the form of the root is: “it is true; the sin is real; that which is.” However, we tend not to think of “sin” and “sinner” in this way, but to think of them as evaluations. In our hearing, “sin” and “sinner” imply judgment, and “bad” or “wrong” or “fault,” and infer that something needs to be changed and/or fixed. But, the words “sin” and “sinner” do not themselves say that. So in order for the word “sinner” to be useful, the idea conveyed by “forgiveness” needs to be attached to it. The word translated as “forgive” is a Greek word meaning “to send forth”—a preposition “off, away,” and the verb “to send.” In this form the word translated as “forgiveness” means “separation, cessation, or reversal.” What happens in forgiveness is that God separates the perception that our life is not what we think it is or should be from the judgment that tells us this is bad or wrong. The judgment is separated from the awareness that we are not who we thought we were or should be, giving us permission to look at who we are, and even to look at who we might be, with no judgment or less judgment. As this separation takes root in us the judgment slowly ceases or reverses in the sense that it simply becomes judgment, an evaluation of the person we are which we internalized from someone else from our past. The judgment is someone else’s opinion of who we are, and has no truth other than that—it is someone else’s opinion which we internalized. Without this separation, judgments appear as facts and not as opinions. It is very liberating to grasp the reality that the judgments we feel are in truth only opinions. The opinions may continue to sound in our heads, but the power of them slowly dissipates as we think of them as someone else’s opinions. As judgment is separated from the perception that our life is not what we thought it was, we are

allowed to think about what our life is, and what that tells us about ourselves.

We can look at the woman in this story as a person who has come to live in a frame of mind where she can remember that the judgments against her are not facts but are someone else's opinions of her. By her remembering this, and by her being convinced about it and relying on it, she has acquired distance from the judgments, so she lives in a state of being forgiven. If we remember this, we are able to make sense of the last thing Jesus says to her: "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." The word translated as "saved" is a word meaning "to save, i.e. deliver, protect," from a root "safe." Her living in this way keeps her safe from being beaten up by being judged for not being who she should be or thought she was, and in that sense keeps her safe. It also brings her "prosperity," another translation of the word "peace." She does not need to know who she is to have the peace and prosperity; she only needs to realize she is forgiven for not being who she thought she should be, and by that is given permission to be who she happens to be.

In this story Jesus uses an illustration of a creditor and two debtors which we can use to understand the origin of the insights given to the woman. In the illustration, the creditor simply cancels the debt of the two debtors. The word translated as "cancel" is a Greek word meaning "to grant as a favor." I think God simply grants insight as a favor. Insights are not something we deserve or can earn by our effort; they are a gift. I think they can be prepared for by information, such as that to be a sinner is to have a particular awareness that we are not living the life we thought we should and were, and that this being true is not wrong or bad; or that the judgment we feel about this is not a fact but rather is someone's opinion which we internalized from our past and needs to be examined. As we give ourselves to this mental and emotional work of pondering this information we will find that over time the insights take hold and begin to operate. As they do so, it creates the space to "show great love."

[Jim Robie, 6-9-16, 4th after Pentecost in cycle C, Luke 7:36—8:3]